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HUNGARY: 1956-1976

ANNCR:

SATURDAY (10/23) WILL MARK THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HUNGARIAN UPRISING THAT WAS CRUSHED BY THE MILITARY INTERVENTION OF THE SOVIET UNION. VOA NEWS ANALYST JOHN ALBERT RECALLS THESE HISTORIC EVENTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS:

VOICE:

TO RECALL ANNIVERSARIES MAKES SENSE ONLY IF THEY HAVE A DEFINITE MEANING FOR TODAY'S WORLD. THIS EVENT CERTAINLY DOES. MANY YOUNG PEOPLE IN HUNGARY AND IN OTHER PARTS OF EASTERN EUROPE MAY NEVER HAVE LEARNED WHAT HAPPENED. LET US RESTATE THE FACTS AS SUCCINCTLY AS POSSIBLE.

ON OCTOBER 23RD, 1956 IN HUNGARY, SPONTANEOUS STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, JOINED BY WORKERS, SOLDIERS AND INTELLECTUALS, LED TO A NATIONAL UPRISING. THE REGIME OF MATYAS RAKOSI HAD ENDED THE PREVIOUS JULY, BUT SECRET POLICE TERROR HAD CONTINUED. THE PEOPLE WANTED AN END TO THIS TERROR AND, ABOVE ALL, THEY WANTED FREE ELECTIONS.

THE REMARKABLE FACT IN THIS SPONTANEOUS UPRISING WAS THAT THE HUNGARIAN SECRET POLICE, IN TRYING TO SUPPRESS IT, WERE NOT AIDED BY SOVIET TROOPS STATIONED IN HUNGARY, AND THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT FORMED WAS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF AN OLD-TIME COMMUNIST, IMRE NAGY. PREMIER NAGY PROMISED FREE ELECTIONS, THE RESTORATION OF AGRARIAN PROPERTY RIGHTS AND IMPARTIAL JUSTICE. DRIVEN BY THE MOMENTUM OF THE POPULAR MOVEMENT, HE ALSO REPUDIATED THE WARSAW PACT AND PROCLAIMED HUNGARY'S NEUTRALITY.

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT, WHILE SEEMING TO NEGOTIATE ABOUT WITHDRAWING ITS TROOPS, PREPARED A MASSIVE MILITARY INTERVENTION,

WHICH BEGAN NOVEMBER 4TH. THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT WAS CRUSHED; MANY WERE EXECUTED, AMONG THEM IMRE NAGY HIMSELF AND THREE OF HIS ASSOCIATES, DESPITE SOVIET PROMISE OF HIS FREEDOM. TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND HUNGARIANS FLED THE COUNTRY, WITH MANY OF THEM ADMITTED IN THE UNITED STATES. THE SOVIET UNION INSTALLED A NEW REGIME, SUBSERVIENT TO MOSCOW, UNDER JANOS KADAR.

THIS, IN SHORT, WAS THE FATE OF THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE'S ATTEMPT TO USE THEIR RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION. THEY LEARNED THROUGH BITTER EXPERIENCE THE LIMITATIONS OF THEIR GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION. AND THEY RECOGNIZED THAT THE FREE NATIONS, DISTRACTED BY THE SUEZ CRISIS AND THE FEARING A POSSIBLE WORLD CONFLAGRATION, DID NOT COME TO THEIR AID.

NOW THE QUESTION MAY BE ASKED WHETHER THE EVENTS OF 1956 WERE A FINAL CHAPTER IN THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE'S LONGING FOR FREEDOM AND WHETHER ALL THE SACRIFICES WERE IN VAIN. AS FAR AS THE SOVIET UNION IS CONCERNED, THINGS IN EASTERN EUROPE HAVE NEVER BEEN THE SAME. TRUE, MOSCOW REMAINS DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN ITS INFLUENCE IN EASTERN EUROPE, EVEN IF IT REQUIRES BRUTAL MILITARY INTERVENTION, AS SHOWN IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1968. BUT THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT ALSO HAS HAD TO REALIZE THAT WITHOUT BASIC CHANGES IN ITS POLICY TOWARD EASTERN EUROPE IT COULD NOT AVOID CONSTANT UNREST. AND THUS THE STALIN-LIKE TERROR OF THE SECRET POLICE HAD TO BE ENDED AND A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF INTERNAL FREEDOM PERMITTED, AS LONG AS IT DID NOT THREATEN PARTY SUPREMACY. BUT, ABOVE ALL, MOSCOW HAD TO REALIZE THAT ITS ECONOMIC POLICY NEEDED DRASTIC CHANGE.

IT WAS WITH SOVIET CONCURRENCE THAT HUNGARY, IN 1968, EMBARKED ON ITS NEW ECONOMIC MECHANISM (NEM) WHICH ESSENTIALLY MEANT DECENTRALIZATION OF ECONOMIC PLANNING, GREATER FREEDOM FOR

INDIVIDUAL ENTERPRISES AND STRONGER ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE WEST. IN HIS BOOK, "PSYCHOLOGY OF EAST-WEST TRADE", ZYGMUNT NAGORSKI OF THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS WRITES THAT THE INTRODUCTION OF REFORMS IN HUNGARY HAS PRODUCED SOCIOPOLITICAL CHANGES "WHICH THE REGIME NEITHER WANTED TO STOP NOR COULD STOP. CONSUMER-ORIENTED INDUSTRIES HAVE SPRUNG UP. MUCH FREER MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND GOODS HAS BEEN INTRODUCED IN HUNGARY -- NEW IDEAS AND A NEW AWARENESS. ASIDE FROM THE ISSUES OF DEFENSE AND FOREIGN POLICY," SAYS NAGORSKI, "THE HUNGARIANS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP A LARGE DEGREE OF INTERNAL FLEXIBILITY WITHOUT FORGETTING THE LIMITS OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER."

IN SHORT, WHILE HUNGARIANS ARE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THESE LIMITATIONS, THEY HAVE LEARNED TO LIVE WITH THEM AND TO ACHIEVE A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF ECONOMIC PROSPERITY. MOSCOW HAS NOT GIVEN THE HUNGARIANS THE RIGHTS THEY FOUGHT FOR IN 1956, BUT IT HAS BEEN FORCED TO CHANGE ITS APPROACH AND TO ACCEPT DRASTIC CHANGES. AFTER A RETURN TO HIS COUNTRY, ONE OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF 1956, CHARLES FENYVESI, WRITES IN THE "NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE" THAT IN HUNGARY THE POPULAR BELIEF IS THAT THE KREMLIN WILL PAY ALMOST ANY PRICE TO MAKE SURE THAT THERE WILL NOT BE ANOTHER HUNGARIAN OCTOBER. BUT THE SAME WRITER ALSO CONCLUDES THAT "THE HOPE FOR A GLORIOUSLY RADICAL CHANGE IS GONE, AS ARE THE OLD DREAMS OF TRUTH AND FREEDOM."

ANOTHER WESTERN OBSERVER, CORRESPONDENT TAD SZULC, OF THE "NEW REPUBLIC" WRITES: "THE FUNDAMENTAL POLICY TODAY IS TO AVOID UNNECESSARY OPPRESSION, TO GRANT AS MANY INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS AS ARE CONSISTENT WITH HUNGARY'S COMMUNIST FRAMEWORK AND TO CONCENTRATE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT." THIS SOBER EVALUATION OF WHAT WAS AND WAS NOT ACHIEVED AFTER 1956 IS PERHAPS

THE BEST ANSWER TO THE BASIC QUESTION WHETHER THIS HISTORIC  
UPRISING HAS HAD LASTING RESULTS.

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